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TITLE: Building an Effective AIDS Prevention Message & Interventions for Heterosexual Male Youth of Color

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ISSUE: Youth providers who have developed AIDS prevention education campaigns targeting young men of color have been wasting money and time. The facilitators have conducted several focus groups over the past two years involving straight youth of color. The youth have stated they have not seen an effective HIV/AIDS prevention message that has inspired them to change their behaviors.

SETTING: Community based organizations, schools, and youth outreach programs.

PROJECT: Educate a group of high-risk straight male youth of Color on the issues of HIV infection and living a healthier lifestyle. In working with this hard to reach population about their high-risk lifestyle, we could reduce the chance of them becoming infected with HIV or becoming a victim of their environment. We were also interested in teaching them to become Peer Leaders.

RESULTS: A group of youth have developed and completed a video project that addresses the concerns of straight male youth of color over the lack of positive attention they receive from society; outreach that is almost nonexistent towards straight male youth; and programs that are targeted towards youth that are not reality based.

LESSONS LEARNED: Before we could begin to educate the target population, we had to first identify their needs and levels of risk. Involving youth in the initial planning stages of the project allowed the educators to assess their needs and develop interventions that address their problems. Including the youth as partners instead of just participants empowered them to go beyond all expectations.

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